

NBII Metadata Clearinghouse

The National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) Metadata Clearinghouse is an important element of the NBII (a cooperative effort coordinated by the USGS to increase access to data and information on the nation's biological resources). Through the NBII Clearinghouse (<http://www.nbii.gov/clearinghouse.html>), Internet users can search through an assortment of standardized descriptions of different biological databases or information products to identify those that meet their particular requirements. These descriptions (metadata) concisely convey such things as subject matter; how, when, where, and by whom the data were collected; how to access the database or information product; and person(s) to contact for more information.

The NBII Clearinghouse includes metadata descriptions of biological databases and information products developed and maintained by USGS scientists, as well as data and information developed and maintained by other NBII participants, including federal, state, and local government agencies; private sector organizations; and other partners around the nation and the world.

The NBII Clearinghouse also functions as a registered node of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) Clearinghouse (<http://www.fgdc.gov/clearinghouse/index.html>), since many of the biological databases described in the NBII Clearinghouse are geospatially referenced. Because the focus

of the NBII is on all types of biological data and information, the NBII Clearinghouse also accommodates metadata descriptions of data sets and information products that are not explicitly geospatial, such as the results of laboratory research.

The metadata holdings of the NBII Clearinghouse node will be continually enlarged, as metadata descriptions of biological data sets and information products are regularly added.

Users can search through the NBII Clearinghouse (much as they would use a card catalog in a library) on a variety of criteria, such as the name of the investigator or author who collected the data/produced the information, subject matter keywords, and spatial coordinates for the location of the study/project. Special biological search criteria, including the ability to search for data or information relating to a particular species or other taxonomic group, are also provided. Metadata descriptions in the NBII Clearinghouse are developed according to the NBII's biological metadata standard (<http://www.nbii.gov/current.status.html>), which also serves as a biological "enhancement" or "profile" of the Federal Geographic Data Committee's Geospatial Metadata Content Standard.

For more information on the NBII Metadata Clearinghouse, please contact Susan Stitt at the USGS Center for Biological Informatics (susan_stitt@usgs.gov).